



JOINT FAO/WHO FOOD STANDARDS PROGRAMME
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE CODEX ALIMENTARIUS COMMISSION
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IMPLEMENTATION OF THE CRITICAL REVIEW

(Prepared by the Codex Secretariat)

Introduction

1. The Executive Committee (CCEXEC) is responsible for the Critical Review, which consists of:
 - (i) Examination of proposed standards before they are submitted to the Commission for adoption;
 - (ii) Review of the development of draft standards against the timeframe agreed by the Commission;
 - (iii) Critical review of proposal for development and/or revision of standards.
2. Prior to CCEXEC71 the Secretariat presented the Critical Review as three separate documents. In order to facilitate the Critical Review by the Executive Committee and to provide a comprehensive overview of the work of each committee, the Secretariat combined the information for the Critical Review at CCEXEC71 in a single document.
3. In particular, CCEXEC71 considered for Critical Review the work of eleven (11) committees which met from CAC38 to May 2016; the work of three committees working by correspondence and a project document for new work submitted by Botswana and Kenya.
4. The purpose of this paper is to seek CCEXEC guidance and advice on ways to improve the type of information provided for the Critical Review in order to facilitate and enhance this function of the CCEXEC in line with activity 1.1.2 “Strengthen the critical review process to improve standards monitoring” of the Codex Strategic Plan (SP).

Preparation of the document

5. Given the schedule of committee meetings and the availability of the reports of the committees working by correspondence, the Critical Review document at CCEXEC71 was divided into two parts:
 - CX/EXEC 16/71/2: information on six committees which met between September 2015 and mid-February 2016 (distributed in May 2016).
 - CX/EXEC 16/71/2 Add.1: information on five committees which met between 22 February and 13 May 2016; three committees working by correspondence and a project document on new work on a regional standard, forwarded by Cameroon and Kenya (distributed in June 2016).
6. The documents provide information from each committee on:
 - (i) Texts forwarded to CAC39 for final adoption
 - (ii) Texts forwarded to CAC39 for adoption at Step 5
 - (iii) Ongoing work (various steps)
 - (iv) Proposals for new work forwarded to CAC39 for approval
 - (v) Discussion papers and/or other papers
 - (vi) Overall workload of the committee
7. The tables, in addition to comments provided by the Chairperson of the relevant committee, also include “explanatory notes”, on the status of endorsement, where applicable, and any other relevant information, as appropriate. For new work proposals the explanatory notes include a brief description of the scope of new work and (for items in the Step process) information on the year of adoption of the new work.

8. The table on overall workload, which was added for the first time to the documents for CCEXEC71, includes considerations from the Chairperson and the Codex Secretariat on workload and management for each committee.

Discussion at CCEXEC71¹

9. CCEXEC71 took approximately three hours (one session) to perform the Critical Review.

10. CCEXEC71 noted that all texts submitted to CAC39 for final adoption and for adoption at Step 5 had duly followed the development process and were ready for adoption; that overall the work of the committees was progressing according to their respective schedules, with a few exceptions for which CCEXEC made specific recommendation to the committees or CAC; and that all items proposed as new work had met the criteria for the Critical Review.

11. CCEXEC71 made specific recommendations on:

- (i) Four texts submitted for adoption (one for adoption at Step 5) out of 31 texts;
- (ii) Seven texts under development out of 24 texts;
- (iii) Three proposals for new work out of seven proposals.

Consideration of Critical Review by CAC39

12. CAC39 considered the recommendations of the CCEXEC71 Critical Review under the relevant agenda items.

13. CAC39 supported all specific recommendations of CCEXEC71. However, in view of the technical comments submitted by members, which are not in the purview of the Critical Review, the following "ready for adoption" texts were adopted at Step 5 only: (i) the Standard for Aubergine; (ii) the NRV for Vitamin E; and (iii) the Maximum Level for lead in MLs for preserved tomatoes and jams, jellies and marmalades.

Conclusion

14. The documents for the Critical Review contain information on relevant decisions, the process followed by committees and the inputs from the chairpersons. This results in quite detailed and extensive documents (the two documents prepared for CCEXEC71 were approximately 9,500 and 10,300 words each), which require considerable time for analysis by CCEXEC members.

15. Furthermore, the documents are often available at a late date (close to the CCEXEC session) due to the schedule of committee meetings (in 2016, from September to May) and the need to receive inputs from the chairpersons. In addition, the late preparation of the documents and their size impact negatively on the timely availability of translations.

16. At CCEXEC71, the Secretariat combined the information for the Critical Review on texts for adoption, monitoring standard development and proposal for new work into a single document, in order to provide CCEXEC members with a comprehensive view of the overall work of each committee.

17. At its next session in June 2017, the Critical Review of CCEXEC will consider the work of eleven committees (meeting between September 2016 and May 2017); three committees working by correspondence (CCMMP, CCS and CCCPL) and six FAO/WHO Coordinating Committees (meeting between September 2016 and February 2017). In view of this schedule, it is proposed to prepare three separate documents for committees held: (i) September to December 2016; (ii) January to March 2017; and (iii) April and May 2017.

Recommendation

18. In order to provide the Executive Committee with a document that better responds to its needs and thus to facilitate the Critical Review function (in line with SP activity 1.1.2), the Executive Committee is invited to advise the Secretariat on how to improve the document for the Critical Review and in particular on:

- (i) The type of information provided (e.g. missing information, unnecessary information);
- (ii) The level of detail of the information included in the document;
- (iii) The way the information is presented (e.g. text or tables, additional sections);
- (iv) The timing of the distribution of the document (e.g. in instalments, following the schedule in para. 17).

¹ [REP16/EXEC](#) paras 7-48